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**From:** Ross, Laurie J - DNR [Laurie.Ross@wisconsin.gov]  
**Sent:** 12/28/2015 10:33:33 PM  
**To:** [Ex. 6 Personal Privacy (PP)]  
**CC:** [Ex. 6 Personal Privacy (PP)] Colvin, Alan R - GOV [Alan.Colvin@wisconsin.gov]; Senator Dave Hansen [sen.hansen@legis.wi.gov]; Rep.Genrich - LEGIS [Rep.Genrich@legis.wisconsin.gov]; Representative Reid Ribble [wi08rrima@mail.house.gov]; katherine.mize@mail.house.gov; Bramblett Jimmy - NRCS Madison WI [jimmy.bramblett@wi.usda.gov]; Davina Bonness [bonnessd@kewauneeco.org]; Burdett, Cheryl [burdett.cheryl@epa.gov]; Hyde, Tinka [hyde.tinka@epa.gov]  
**Subject:** [Ex. 6 Personal Privacy (PP)] RE: Wisconsin's sad legacy to Open for Business: Water unfit to drink

Thank you for your email which was forwarded to the Natural Resources Board as well as to appropriate department staff for their consideration.

Best regards,

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Laurie J. Ross

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**From:** [Ex. 6 Personal Privacy (PP)]  
**Sent:** Monday, December 28, 2015 4:09 PM  
**To:** Ross, Laurie J - DNR  
**Cc:** Dave Clausen; Colvin, Alan R - GOV; Senator Dave Hansen; Rep.Genrich - LEGIS; Representative Reid Ribble; katherine.mize@mail.house.gov; Bramblett Jimmy - NRCS Madison WI; Davina Bonness; Cheryl Burdett; Hyde, Tinka  
**Subject:** Wisconsin's sad legacy to Open for Business: Water unfit to drink

[http://m.host.madison.com/ct/opinion/column/bill-berry-safe-drinking-water-a-sure-bet-no-longer/article\\_5b16a1c6-f680-57f4-b37a-5d98e081820b.html](http://m.host.madison.com/ct/opinion/column/bill-berry-safe-drinking-water-a-sure-bet-no-longer/article_5b16a1c6-f680-57f4-b37a-5d98e081820b.html)

# Bill Berry: Safe drinking water a sure bet no longer

- BILL BERRY | state columnist

- 8 hrs ago

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- PHOTO BY BRIDGIT BOWDEN — WISCONSIN CENTER FOR INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM

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STEVENS POINT — There was a time when people in states like Wisconsin and Michigan could be sure that their drinking water was safe. Not anymore.

The stories of bad water in Kewaunee County in northeast Wisconsin and Flint, Michigan, in the Lower Peninsula differ in detail but are eerily similar on some important basics. And those basics point to state administrations that put business interests and government spending cuts above the health and well-being of their most vulnerable citizens.

Flint's troubles began when it was being run by a state-appointed emergency manager. It changed its drinking water source from Detroit's water system to the Flint River to save money. In a massive regulatory failure, state officials never required that the river water be treated to make it less corrosive, causing lead from plumbing and pipes to leach into the water supply.

Soon residents learned of rising levels of lead in the blood of Flint children. Lead poisoning can cause irreversible health and behavioral problems, and children exposed to too much can permanently lose IQ points.

As we learned last week, the state ignored conclusive evidence of lead poisoning and publicly dismissed research findings that linked lead in children's blood to Flint water. Those findings were sent directly to Gov. Rick "Austerity" Snyder's office. Now the state is claiming it made an honest mistake. Mistake? You bet. Honest? Come on. The city reconnected to the Detroit water system in October, but local officials are still advising residents not to drink the water unless they're using a lead-clearing filter.

There was a time when this kind of malfeasance would be enough to end the political career of the likes of Snyder, but not in today's world.

Meanwhile, people in Kewaunee County are dealing with unsafe wells and a regulatory agency, the Department of Natural Resources, run by political appointees who are more interested in being "open for business" than protecting human health. It got so bad that citizens in Kewaunee County have petitioned the Environmental Protection Agency to step in and enforce clean water laws where the DNR has refused or claimed it doesn't have the authority to do so.

The problem in Kewaunee County is too many cows and too much manure. The county has nearly 100,000 cows, up 64 percent from 59,800 cattle in 1983. Large-scale farms have proliferated. The county is perched atop fragile karst topography, which allows pollutants to make their way to groundwater through cracks and fissures. So while large-farm operators might be doing everything according to current rules, the current rules aren't enough. And in the current framework of failing rules, the land has exceeded its carrying capacity.

Results of a study released this month show that more than one-third of wells in the county were found to be unsafe because they failed to meet health standards for drinking water. The study is significant because unlike previous ones, it was random. While the researchers caution that cow manure can't be blamed for the unsafe wells just yet, would anyone like to venture a bet?

Rather than stepping into the picture on behalf of citizens whose wells are tainted, state officials and Gov. Scott Walker have ignored or danced around the issue. What's clear about this administration is regardless of the environmental issue — metallic mining in northern Wisconsin, frac sand mining in western Wisconsin, cow manure in eastern Wisconsin — this administration will err on the wrong side of the rights of the little people.

But times may be changing. Local people are acting where their state has failed. In April, voters in the Kewaunee County OK'd a groundwater protection ordinance prohibiting manure spreading from Jan. 1 to April 15 on land with 20 feet or less of soil before reaching bedrock.

The trend in the Legislature, meanwhile, has been to reduce local powers. Flint, Michigan, might have some advice on that.

*Bill Berry of Stevens Point writes a semimonthly column for The Capital Times. [billnick@charter.net](mailto:billnick@charter.net)*